CORRESPONDENCE/MEMORANDUM

State of Wisconsin

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TO: Rest Lake Dam/Manitowish River Work Group

FROM: Jim Kreitlow

SUBJECT: Minutes of our September 23, 2004 meeting

Selected work group members representing their associations met on September 23, 2004. Jack King called the meeting. The purpose of the meeting was more of a check in. Jack really had no agenda for the meeting, except for promoting an active dialog between user groups so individuals could exchange their point of view and ask questions of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). An understanding of future project direction would also be discussed.

Discussion centered on the following issues:

1. DNR property owners survey.
2. Downstream fluctuation in water flow.
3. Sturgeon reproduction (stocking vs. natural reproduction).
4. Physical constraints of the dam.
5. Fish Passage/channel modification/stocking vs. natural reproduction.
6. Public interest flow regime.
7. Future direction.

I want to thank those who participated. I thought it was a good meeting.

Participants

1. Jim Kreitlow, WDNR, 107 Sutliff Avenue, Rhinelander, WI. 54501, Kreitj@dnr.state.wi.us 365-8947.
2. Bob Martini, WDNR, 107 Sutliff Avenue, Rhinelander WI. 54501 martire@dnr.state.wi.us 365-8969.
3. John Hansen, Town Chairman, 217 Spider Lake Road, Manitowish Waters, WI. 54545 Jlhmjh@centurytel.net 543-2438.
4. Bob and Helen Townsend, Friends of the Manitowish River, 73 River Access Road, Manitowish Waters, WI. 54545. Bhtownsend@yahoo.com 543-2166.
5. Rob Olson, Xcel Energy, 1414 West Hamilton Avenue, PO Box 8, Eau Claire, WI. Robert.w.olson@xcelenergy.com 839-1353.
6. Mary Sinkus, Manitowish Waters Lakes Association, PO Box 458, Manitowish Waters, WI. Pinebarons@centurytel.net 543-8464.
7. Jack King, Manitowish Waters Lakes Association, PO Box 286, Manitowish Waters WI. 54545. jgrovking@yahoo.com
8. John Bates, Friends of the Manitowish River, 4245 North Highway 47, Mercer WI. 54547 476-2828.
9. Harland Klagos, Manitowish Waters Alliance, 40 West Bay Road, Manitowish Waters, WI. 54545. Klagos@centurytel.net 543-8246.
10. Bob Brunnilson, Friends of the Manitowish River, 39 Townsend Road, Manitowish Waters, WI. 715-543-8057.

Rest Lake Chain water level evaluation study proposal (DNR Property Owners Survey)

At our last meeting in June the DNR proposed to develop a survey that could be used to involve property owners to help us gather information on the possible impacts of reduced winter water levels on shoreline structures. A final draft of that survey was shared with members of the committee prior to the September 23rd meeting. The upstream user groups discussed the survey and recommended that the DNR not send it out because involving the property owners in the collection of data was impractical because many seasonal residents are gone for the year. The work group recommended that the DNR conduct its own field survey to gather the information to assess possible damage to shoreline structures. Jim Kreitlow recommended that John Hansen, Harland Klagos and Jack King participate in the survey as well. This work will occur in late October when the chain is close to full draw down. The work group decided that boathouses and shoreline structures (retaining walls, sea walls, and riprap) should be the primary focus and that piers/docks could be evaluated but they should not be the main focus because of options available to land owners (removal, modifications etc.) Note: DNR staff conducted the shoreline survey on October 27, 2004. The entire shoreline of all lakes was evaluated.

Downstream fluctuation in water flow

A concern expressed by landowners downstream is the sudden changes in water flow in the spring (during chain refill) and in the fall during draw down. They would like to see these major swings minimized in the future. This could be accomplished by ramping the flows up or down in the spring or fall to the best extent practical. It should be noted that if we receive heavy rain at times when the flowage is full or when it is being drawn down, Xcel Energy no longer has the ability to control flow down stream, which could contribute to flooding. This issue will be covered when developing a public interest flow regime. It was agreed that the chain would be drawn down this fall as it has in the past (October 1- November 1).

Sturgeon spring flow goals

The department is currently collecting field data to support the Physical Habitat Simulation Model (Phabsim). We should have the data necessary to determine spring flow goals needed for sturgeon spawning. This will allow us to evaluate options to meet flow goals such as:

1. Extending the spring fill period.
2. Reducing the winter draw down (additional storage)
3. Filling the chain sooner (before ice out) to capture initial runoff in the spring.

Again, this will be a part of the public interest flow regime.

Physical constraints of Rest Lake Dam

Some discussion occurred on this issue. Some thought that the chain could be filled higher than 8'. 6"-8'. 7" (up to a foot). Rest Lake Dam is a high hazard dam (must pass a 1,000-year flood flow). It is classified this way because of the absence of any floodplain zoning below the dam. The dam does, however, have sufficient spillway capacity to meet high hazard criteria. The 1,000-year flood is 2,500 cfs and the Rest Lake Dam is capable of passing 7,500 cfs. In recent years the highest flow has been in the 600 plus cfs range. The Rest Lake Dam can pass the Inflow Design Flood (IDF) of 2,000 cfs without surcharging the pond level above the normal full pool elevation of 1,601.2 ft (8'. 6"). At the time of the 1,000-year flood, the lake level would be much higher than 8'. 7", but it is not desirable to hold these higher elevations on a regular basis.

Fish Passage/channel modification/stocking vs. natural reproduction

Jack King brought up these three topics. Jack wanted to know if the department has the authority to require fish passage**.** Bob Martini responded stating that department will not have the authority to order fish passage until the proposed new administrative rule is finalized and money is made available for cost sharing. Would the department consider channel modification rather then increase spring flows to allow fish movement? The department feels attraction flows are needed to stimulate sturgeon movement in the spring above the current 50-cfs minimum flow. Channel modification may not be needed if flows are maintained above the minimum (greater then 50-cfs). Sturgeon should be able to navigate the river under these flow conditions. The problem with channel modification at some locations in the river (wide and shallow locations) is the sand substrate. Deepening of the channel would only be a temporary solution because of the shifting sand. It's likely that the deepened areas would re-fill with sand. Jack also asked why we don't just stock sturgeon to maintain the population and don't worry about spring flows. Our overall goal is to rehabilitate the population so there is a naturally sustainable population. This requires both stocking (when possible) and habitat preservation. We feel the habitat is available but the conditions need to be improved in terms of flow velocity and water depth.

Public interest flow regime

The work group asked that the department develop some proposals that the work group could review. A public interest flow regime will be developed including options that could be considered to meet those goals. This would allow the various interest groups to share this with their membership and get their reaction. The department should be in the position to present in December or January of next year. It should be noted that Rob Olson of Xcel stated that Xcel would not make any changes in the dam operation unless ordered by the department.

Future direction

All work group members agree that it is important to work together and reach a reasonable solution. Litigation was not in the best interest of the group. Group members also agree that it is the department's job to protect the resources. This tone and outcome of this meeting are encouraging. I truly believe this group is committed to working together.